NORTH BELLINGHAM HILL REVITALIZATION PLAN

OCTOBER 2009

A model of collaboration between residents, the City of Chelsea, and Chelsea Neighborhood Developers.

Chelsea Neighborhood Developers
Building homes. Creating community.

community design resource center of Boston

From Distress to A Vibrant Gateway:
A Community Action Plan For Chelsea's Bellingham Hill Neighborhood

Over the course of 2009 the City of Chelsea and Chelsea Neighborhood Developers partnered with residents of the Bellingham Hill section of the Shurtleff-Bellingham neighborhood to create a new vision for the area. Ideas for improving the neighborhood were generated by residents and by city and community leaders at a series of planning meetings; priority ideas were incorporated into the Action Plan. The Plan recognizes that sustainable improvement requires changes on many levels: in the built environment, in the neighborhood's social networks, and in improvements to the economic opportunities available to residents. To be successful, the plan requires that its community partners -- Bellingham Hill residents, the City of Chelsea, and Chelsea Neighborhood Developers -- each commit to specific action steps. Partner representatives have each endorsed the plan and are ready to get to work to make this vision a reality. A full plan is available on request.

The Area:

The Northern side of Bellingham Hill is comprised of four streets: Bellingham, Grove, Marlboro, and Library, which run from Chelsea's downtown up and over Bellingham Hill. The area is poised for change as residents, the City and CND have partnered to identify and address long standing problems. Bellingham Hill was densely built in the early 1900's in an era before cars were common. A significant portion of the housing is in disrepair; overcrowding and illegal apartments are common, and foreclosures are concentrated in this area. The narrow streets are clogged with cars, parking is limited, and infrastructure is in need of repair. Trash and crime reflect the blight of the neighborhood. Against this backdrop, the emerging Box District, a new neighborhood built on the foundation of a former industrial area bordering Bellingham Hill, inspires hope among residents of Bellingham Hill about the potential for transformation in their neighborhood.

A Commitment to Improve:

The City of Chelsea and Chelsea Neighborhood Developers have focused their attention on this four-block corridor, believing that significant impact could be realized through strong community partnerships. Months of research and analysis laid the groundwork for a series of four neighborhood charrettes over the summer of 2009. Led by pro bono planners and architects from The Community Design Resource Center (CDRC), the four charrettes attracted over 97 residents and key neighborhood stakeholders, who together created this blueprint for revitalization.

Priorities For Redevelopment Included:

- Clean sidewalks and streets in good repair
- Plenty of parking
- Crime reduction to improve a sense of safety
- Traffic calming to slow speeding cars
- Great parks
- High quality places to live
- A strong sense of community
- Increased economic opportunity

The Process:

Charrette 1:
Listening, June 9, 2009:
Residents articulated a vision for the future of their neighborhood drawing on what residents identified as its strengths: diversity, frequent and reliable public transportation, the adjacent Box District and other new developments in the area.

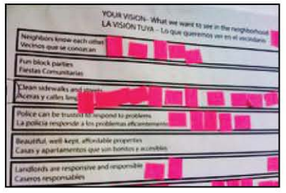
Charrette 2:
Testing Design Ideas, July 9, 2009:
CDRC tested design proposals that addressed concerns brought up in the first charrette; Charrette participants provided more information to refine and focus the proposals.

Charrette 3:
Listening to Financial Needs and Testing Ideas, July 22, 2009:
In a focused discussion about developing their financial assets, residents identified barriers to financial well-being (including knowledge, skills, and access to resources and jobs) and responded to proposals to address those needs.

Charrette 4:
Establishing a Plan, September 15, 2009:
Participants engaged in a lively review of proposed solutions, and discussed their priorities.

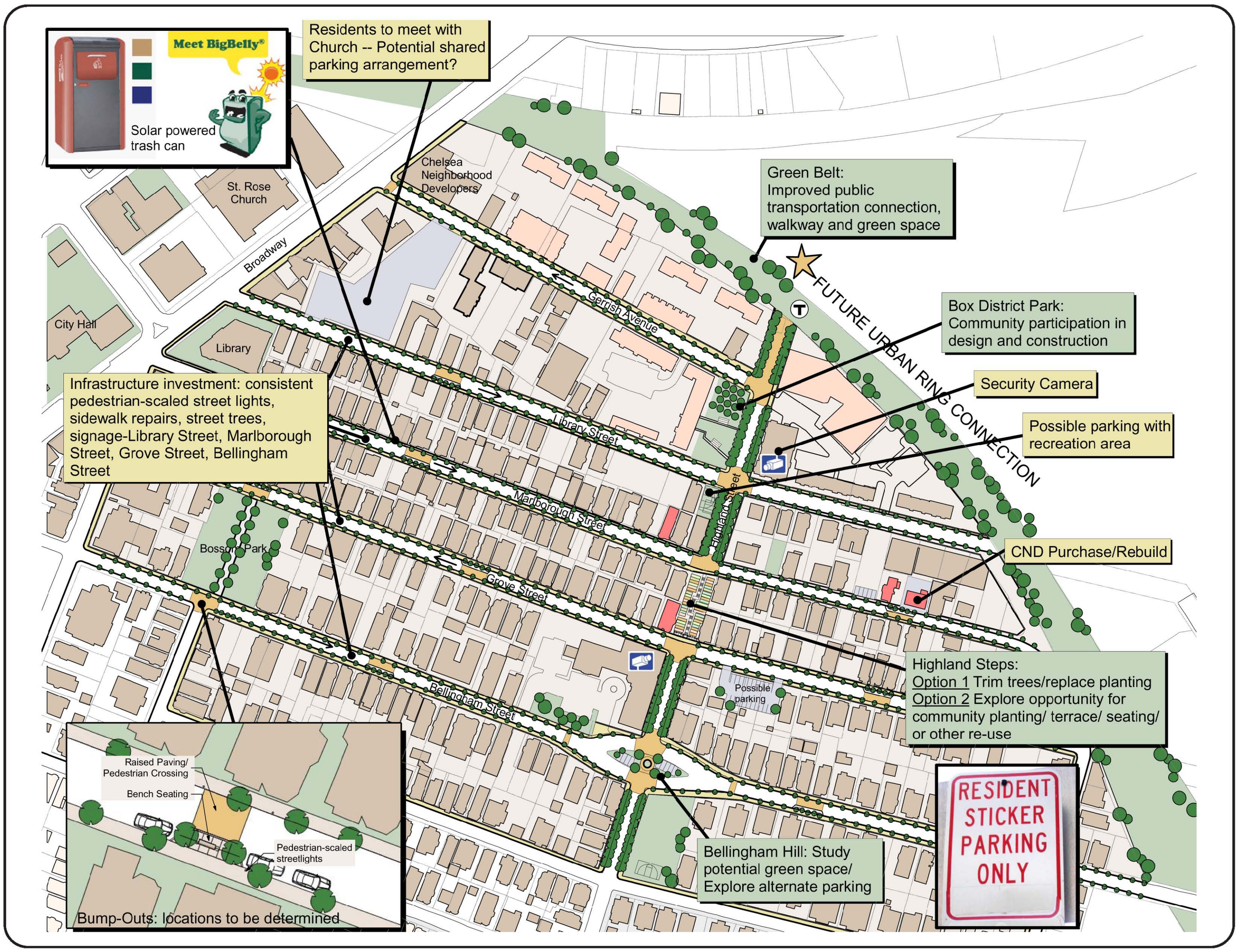
The Plan

Issues	City	Residents	CND
Security	• Community Action Team meetings manage security on monthly basis. • Front Porch Light program		
	• Security Cameras • Additional Street Lights	• Box Watch (can expand to other areas)	
		• Neighbors report problems to police	
Speeding	• Partner with the Parking and Traffic Commission to reduce speed limit		
	• Traffic Calming Task Force		
	• Step up speed enforcement		
Trash	• Trash Task Force • Explore grants for solar powered public trash cans		
	• Targeted code enforcement	• Community Enhancement Team campaign to reduce trash/litter and increase recycling.	
Housing Disrepair	• Targeted code enforcement • Home rehab loans	• Residents clean up their yards and repair their homes.	• Purchase and rehab/rebuilding foreclosed properties
Parks/ Green space	• Urban Ring advocacy to insure great walking path • Create Box District Park		
	• Highland Steps redesign • Bellingham Hill Circle upgrading	• Box District active playground and park design/build	
Parking	• Resident-only parking. • In-fill parking lots.	• Advocate for shared parking in St. Rose lot	
Economic concerns		• Financial education and savings programs • Neighborhood Economics Center	
Social Connections	Offer opportunities for resident input on city policy through: • Trash Task Force • Traffic Calming Task Force	• NeighborCircles fosters neighborliness • Leadership Training programs • Annual events create culture of fun!	



NORTH BELLINGHAM HILL REVITALIZATION PLAN

The Plan

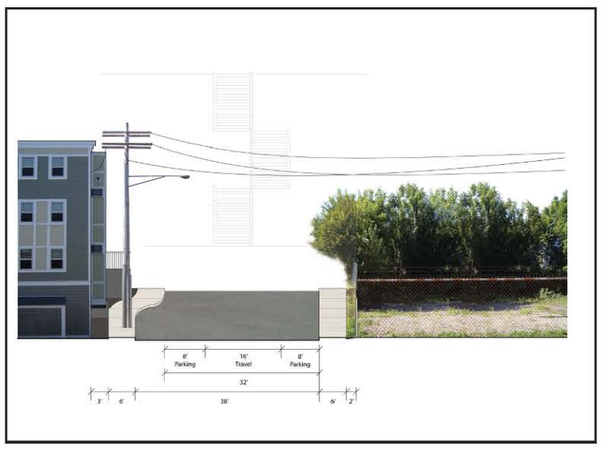


Bellingham Hill Revitalization Plan Implementation

Issues	Short Term (1 year)	Medium Term (1-3 yrs)	Long Term (3-8 Yrs)
Green Space	• CDRC-CND Green Highland Planning Process • Box District Active Park	• Highland Steps and Bellingham Circle transformed into greener, cleaner, community spaces* • More street trees added • Urban Ring/Green Belt advocacy • Entire Box District Park com-	• Green Belt Walking path* • More street trees
Traffic Calming	• Traffic Advisory Group formed • Speed limits lowered and enforced	• Bulb outs and raised crosswalks added in key intersections*	
Parking	• Enforced resident only parking throughout the neighborhood	• In-fill parking lots on available parcels • Metered spots installed at St Rose	
Trash	• Trash Committee formed • Comprehensive pilot program in Bellingham Hill corridor	• Public barrels installed • Citywide trash and recycling education initiative	
Security	• Surveillance Cameras installed • Front Porch Light program	• Community Action Team facilitates resident ownership of neighborhood security • More street lights installed	• More street lights installed
Housing/ Infrastructure	• Targeted Code Enforcement by ISD • CND purchases and rebuilds four foreclosed properties • City Home Improvement loan program established	• CND purchases and rebuilds four more properties* • Repave streets and repair sidewalks	
Economic/Social	• NeighborCircles, First Thursday dinners, CET provide opportunities for community engagement • Financial Empowerment classes, IDA savings programs, and free tax prep offer economic support	• Family Economic Center opens* • Leadership training empowers more neighborhood groups	

*Schedule for these items subject to funding

Street Sections



Highland and Gerrish Existing Condition

Box District Proposed Park

Highland Steps Existing Condition

Highland Steps Proposed Park

Special Thanks To...

CHELSEA RESIDENTS

Sandra Aguiluz
Shawkat Ahmed
Eric Aldana
Flor Aldana
Richard Bednavek
Robert Burnham
Christian Calvo
Andrea Castillo
James Castellanos
Norma Canelas
Angela Chen
John Chen
Bob Collins
Olivia Contreras
Glenda Cruz
Iris Delgado
Lucia Diaz
Minerva Diaz
Jack Dong
Kara Dong
Terry Englen
Jason Frakes
Ron Fishman
Ingrid Galves
Amy Gomez
Helen Gurska
Richard Gurska
Rich Gurska
Luz Guzman
Dan Hamilton
Yovanny Henningsen
Sufra Jabin
Don Johnston
Ilyas Karama
Scott Kelley
Robert LaCates
Susan Loguidice
Enio Lopez
Ivonne Lopez
Alekza Lopez
Alvaro Lopez
Alvaro Jr. Lopez
Carol Martinez
Jordy Mejia
Elias Meza
Raymond Morales
Mary Muckern
Aymara Nunez
Patrick Obounou
Rebecca Roseme Obounou
Rossana Osario
Ninette Ortiz
Mary Pinkman
Sulma Ponce
Myrthea Ramos
Mayra Rivera
Geoffrey Rivers
Madeline Rodriguez
Julio Rosado
Juan Ruiz
Veronica Ruiz
Salvador Sanchez
Michel Sandoval
Sara I. Sandoval
Dacey Sartor
Ryan Stoute
Maria Teixeira
Jenna Toro
Jose Toro
Sheila Tylus
Ana Marina Vaquerano
Tito Vaquerano
Sandra Whitley

CDRC

Gamble and Associates
David Gamble
Brian Gregory
Icon Architects
Kendra Halliwell
Jenn Van Kuren
Nancy Ludwig
Michelle Apigian
Erik Miller
Perkins + Will
Carey Givens
John Fuller
Klopfer Martin Design Group
Kaki Martin

CND STAFF

Wendy Barrientos
Cat Dodson Goodrich
Ben Faust
Marissa Guananja
Ann Houston
David Keene
Emily Loomis
Nadhia Ojeda
George Reuter
Carol Rijo
Janet Stearns
Brian Meyer

CHELSEA OFFICIALS AND STAFF

Jay Ash, City Manager
Ned Keefe, Deputy City Manager
Brian Kyes, Chief of Police
John DePriest, Dir. of Planning and Development
Carol Martinez Asst. Dir. of Planning and Development
Sammy Mojica, Community Liaison Officer

CITY COUNCILORS

Roy Avelleneda
Paula Barton
Brian Hatleberg

CDRC-Boston Mission Statement:

Assisting communities to envision and implement high-quality and sustainable designs.

About Chelsea Neighborhood Developers:

Chelsea Neighborhood Developers is a nonprofit community development corporation that believes that great neighborhoods empower families to grow and prosper. CND builds vibrant neighborhoods that foster connections among people and to place and that stimulate further investment in the neighborhood's social fabric, economic life, and built environments. Board President Christian Calvo is a life-long Chelsea resident who founded a property maintenance business in the city. Christian says "CND does our part to make Chelsea's multi-cultural neighborhoods vibrant. We build affordable and mixed-income housing. We help families to realize their economic dreams. And we bring residents together to participate in making our neighborhoods safe, clean, friendly and desirable."

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